

# Boise State football standout to receive kidney transplant from twin sister

By Lisa Asato

Fraternal twins Jeremy and Jasmine Ioane have always been close. Best friends, the Hawaiian-Samoan siblings share a love of sports and a natural competitiveness – jockeying to see who could be the better student-athlete at Punahou School – he in football and baseball, and she in softball.

On May 5, that bond between twins will be further forged when Jeremy, 23, receives a kidney from Jasmine. The kidney transplant will be done at the University of Utah.

In 2014, Jeremy – one of the nation's top defensive backs – was playing his senior year of football at Boise State University – all the while getting dialysis to treat a kidney disease that was diagnosed his sophomore year through a random drug test.

He continued playing his sophomore and junior years, factoring in chemotherapy and medication into his routine but feeling relatively fine. “Going into my senior year, that summer is when I started to notice symptoms of swelling in my legs and my lower body, and that’s when we ran more tests and found



Jasmine Ioane, right, watched brother Jeremy play on Senior Night at Boise State University on Nov. 29, 2014. He made a solo tackle in a 50-19 win over Utah State. - Courtesy: Ioane family

that my kidney functions were actually getting worse and that’s when they decided I had to go to dialysis,” Jeremy said by phone before going to a four-hour treatment at Windward Dialysis Center in Kāne‘ohe that afternoon.

**My sister being my donor, it’s crazy to think that because we grew up with each other. We’ve been around each other forever. She’s like my best friend.”**

— Jeremy Ioane

A Boise resident, Jeremy was diagnosed with a kidney disease known as IgA nephropathy in which the antibody called immunoglobulin A, or IgA, collects in the kidney, reducing its ability to filter waste and other materials.

The disease sapped him of energy, ending his senior season early and dashing his hopes of playing in the NFL.

Jasmine says it was hard seeing her brother, who’s always been so athletic, become so tired and unable to compete. “It hurt me seeing him like that because going into his senior year,

we all knew he was ready to ‘ball out’ for his senior year and everything just happened so fast. And it was really sad. I had wished that it was me that had to go through that instead of him,” said Jasmine, who will graduate May 1 from Utah’s Weber State University, where she played softball.

At first, it was difficult for Jeremy to accept that Jasmine wanted to be the one to donate her kidney to him, but he came around to the idea through time and talking with others who have gone through transplants, she said. And by the time she got the

call that she was approved as a donor, he had come to accept it.

“My sister being my donor, it’s crazy to think that because we grew up with each other,” Jeremy said. “We’ve been around each other forever. She’s like my best friend. Having her be my donor, it means the world to me and it’s like my own sister giving me new life.”

For Jasmine, she said doesn’t see donating her kidney to her brother as a sacrifice. “I don’t

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## Releasing placenta to newborn’s parents now allowed by law in certain cases

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Native Hawaiian Legal Corp.

In 2005, a young Hawaiian couple, excitedly awaiting the birth of their first child, dutifully notified their doctor and hospital that they wanted their baby’s ‘iwe, or placenta, after the birth had occurred. At first the answer from hospital officials was silence as the request went up the chain of command. Then finally a response of “No,” because the state’s health laws classified the ‘iwe as infectious waste bound for the incinerator.

For centuries, Hawaiian families have practiced the time-honored protocol of cleaning and burying the ‘iwe as part of a ritual to help the child forge a connection with his or her ancestors and place of birth.

“We were excited to provide our child the space and opportunity to be ‘rooted’ without question to her ‘āina hānau. Rooted – physically, spiritually and psychologically,” said Kihei Nahale-a, the father who asked the hospital for his newborn’s ‘iwe.

“It is for our ‘ohana the opportunity to ceremoniously reconnect and recommit our lineages to our ancestral home, to our familial landscape. By this I don’t mean connecting to where we come from but rather to whom we descend from ... ‘Āina.”

But with hospitals adhering to the state’s new infectious waste laws, families were sent away disoriented and dismayed.

“For me as a kāne it was frustrating to not be able to protect my ‘ohana, my wahine and my hiapo (first born) from insensitive and prejudicial actions,” Kihei said.

On behalf of the young Hawaiian couple, the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation filed a preliminary injunction to prevent the hospital from disposing of the ‘iwe.

This lawsuit was the first step in a long process of educating not only

the courts but also hospitals and eventually the state Department of Health. Finally, through legislative action in 2006, the laws governing infectious waste were amended to allow for the release of the ‘iwe if the mother-to-be tested negative for certain diseases and conditions. Although the law was adopted, families have remained vigilant as NHLHC has represented at least three more families to address interference with this traditional practice.

“It was not the way we wanted our child’s life to start. We were blessed though. Blessed with loving family and supportive friends. Most importantly we were blessed with the ability to call upon our kūpuna through pule and oli. And they came ... they answered. Through all of the rough times they came,” Kihei said. ■



State law had previously classified placenta as infectious waste bound for incineration. - Photo: Thinkstock

